

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ATTACK UPON THE BIBLE IN THESE END TIMES

October 21, 2001 (David W. Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) - The critical onslaught against the Bible began in the late 18th century but did not begin to receive wide attention until the late 19th century. **MODERNISM**, with its unbelieving approach to Scripture, grew up together with Darwin's theory of evolution and Marx's theory of communism. Modernists view the Bible as a human book. "Inspiration," to them, is more akin to the "inspiration" of a Shakespeare or a Milton. They question the miracles of the Bible. They theorize that the Bible grew up as a product of the evolving religious convictions of the Jewish people. In other words, they are saying that the God of the Bible did not create the Jews; the Jews created the God of the Bible. By the early part of the 20th century, Modernism, in its endless manifestations, had made deep inroads into the mainline Protestant and Baptist denominations.

The **FUNDAMENTALIST**-Modernist controversy arose in the early 20th century when Bible-believing men stood against modernistic unbelief and separated from the denominations which were committed to the same. New denominations and associations were formed by the separatist, militant-for-the-truth Fundamentalists.

Many of the children of these old-time Fundamentalists, though, lacked the conviction of their fathers and rejected biblical separation and what they labeled as the unnecessary "negativism" of their fathers and formed the **NEW EVANGELICAL** movement in the 1940s. This was a spirit of neutrality. New Evangelicals claimed to love the truth, but they did not hate error. They practiced infiltration of the modernistic denominations and organizations rather than separation. New Evangelical men, in their enthusiasm for credentials and recognition, in their zeal to meet the Modernists on their own turf, trained at the feet of Modernists. The Bible warns that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. The Bible also warns that it is by their good words and fair speeches that false teachers deceive. It is no surprise, then, that the New Evangelical movement was influenced by Modernistic thought. New Evangelicalism, with its positive orientation, became immensely popular and spread throughout the old Evangelical world. Large ecumenical parachurch evangelistic ministries, such as the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Campus Crusade for Christ and Youth for Christ, wielded massive influence and spread the New Evangelical philosophies far and wide. The result is that most of that which is labeled Evangelicalism today is New Evangelical in its positivistic orientation.

The New Evangelical approach to the Bible is very confusing. On the one hand, New Evangelicals claim to believe the Bible is the infallible Word of God. On the other hand, many of them recommend the writings of Modernists and they entertain modernistic theories. Large numbers of men who claim to be Evangelical use the historic-critical approach to the Old Testament, which denies the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Others entertain the "form criticism" approach to the Gospels, which claims that the

authors founded the gospels upon various sources such as oral tradition and unknown documents. Great numbers of Evangelicals have also allowed the term “inspiration” to be cleverly redefined to allow for error. This has been documented in books written by key Evangelical leaders. Consider the following statements:

"A GROWING VANGUARD OF YOUNG GRADUATES OF EVANGELICAL COLLEGES WHO HOLD DOCTORATES FROM NON-EVANGELICAL DIVINITY CENTERS NOW QUESTION OR DISOWN INERRANCY and the doctrine is held less consistently by evangelical faculties. ... Some retain the term and reassure supportive constituencies but nonetheless stretch the term's meaning" (Carl F.H. Henry, "Conflict Over Biblical Inerrancy," *Christianity Today*, May 7, 1976).

"This change of position with respect to the infallibility of the Bible is widespread and has occurred in evangelical denominations, Christian colleges, theological seminaries, publishing houses, and learned societies" (Harold Lindsell, former vice-president and professor Fuller Theological Seminary and Editor Emeritus of *Christianity Today*, *The Battle for the Bible*, 1976, p. 20).

"Most people outside the evangelical community itself are totally unaware of the profound changes that have occurred within evangelicalism during the last several years—in the movement's understanding of the inspiration and authority of Scripture, in its social concerns, cultural attitudes and ecumenical posture, and in the nature of its emerging leadership. ... evangelical theologians have begun looking at the Bible with a scrutiny reflecting THEIR WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE OF THE PRINCIPLES OF HISTORICAL AND LITERARY CRITICISM ... The position—affirming that Scripture is inerrant or infallible in its teaching on matters of faith and conduct but not necessarily in all its assertions concerning history and the cosmos—IS GRADUALLY BECOMING ASCENDANT AMONG THE MOST HIGHLY RESPECTED EVANGELICAL THEOLOGIANS. ... these new trends ... indicate that EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY IS BECOMING MORE CENTRIST, MORE OPEN TO BIBLICAL CRITICISM and more accepting of science and broad cultural analysis. One might even suggest that THE NEW GENERATION OF EVANGELICALS IS CLOSER TO BONHOEFFER, BARTH AND BRUNNER than to Hodge and Warfield on the inspiration and authority of Scripture" (Richard Quebedeaux, author of *The Young Evangelicals* and *The Worldly Evangelicals*, "The Evangelicals: New Trends and Tensions," *Christianity and Crisis*, Sept. 20, 1976, pp. 197-202).

"A SURPRISING ARRAY OF EQUALLY DEDICATED EVANGELICALS IS FORMING TO INSIST THAT ACCEPTANCE OF HISTORIC CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES DOES NOT REQUIRE BELIEF IN AN INERRANT BOOK. ... What has made it a new ball game today is the emergence of a new type of evangelical. These persons accept the cardinal doctrines of Christianity in their full and literal meaning but agree that the higher critics have a point: there are errors in Scripture, and some of its precepts must be recognized as being culturally and historically conditioned" (G. Aiken Taylor, "Is God as Good as His Word?" *Christianity Today*, Feb. 4, 1977).

"WITHIN EVANGELICALISM THERE ARE A GROWING NUMBER WHO ARE MODIFYING THEIR VIEWS ON THE INERRANCY OF THE BIBLE SO THAT THE FULL AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE IS COMPLETELY UNDERCUT. But is happening in very subtle ways. Like the snow lying side-by-side on the ridge, the new views on biblical authority often seem at first glance not to be very far from what evangelicals, until just recently, have always believed. But also, like the snow lying side-by-side on the ridge, the new views when followed consistently end up a thousand miles apart. WHAT MAY SEEM LIKE A MINOR DIFFERENCE AT FIRST, IN THE END MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD ... COMPROMISING THE FULL AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE EVENTUALLY AFFECTS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICALLY and how we live in the full spectrum of human life" (Francis Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, 1983, p. 44).

"MY MAIN CONCERN IS WITH THOSE WHO PROFESS TO BELIEVE THAT THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD AND YET BY, WHAT I CAN ONLY CALL, SURREPTITIOUS AND DEVIOUS MEANS, DENY IT. THIS IS, SURPRISINGLY ENOUGH, A POSITION THAT IS TAKEN WIDELY IN THE EVANGELICAL WORLD. ALMOST ALL OF THE LITERATURE WHICH IS PRODUCED IN THE EVANGELICAL WORLD TODAY FALLS INTO THIS CATEGORY. In the October 1985 issue of *Christianity Today*, a symposium on Bible criticism was featured. The articles were written by scholars from several evangelical seminaries. NOT ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS IN THAT SYMPOSIUM IN *CHRISTIANITY TODAY* WAS PREPARED TO REJECT HIGHER CRITICISM. All came to its defense. It became evident that all the scholars from the leading seminaries in this country held to a form of higher criticism. THESE MEN CLAIM TO BELIEVE THAT THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD. AT THE SAME TIME THEY ADOPT HIGHER CRITICAL METHODS IN THE

EXPLANATION OF THE SCRIPTURES" (Herman Hanko, Professor of Church History and New Testament, Protestant Reformed Seminary, *The Battle for the Bible*, 1993, pp. 2,3).

"At one extreme are those who have recoiled into Anglo-Catholicism in reaction to pietistic subjectivism; at the other are those who have taken their stand on the verities of old-time Fundamentalism as a way of rejecting evangelical softness. BUT IN BETWEEN THESE FAR SHORES LIE THE CHOPPY WATERS THAT MOST EVANGELICALS NOW PLY WITH THEIR BOATS, AND HERE THE WINDS OF MODERNITY BLOW WITH DISCONCERTING FORCE, FRAGMENTING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE EVANGELICAL. This is because evangelicals have allowed their confessional center to dissipate" (David F. Wells, Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, *No Place for the Truth or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?*, 1994, pp. 128,129).

These testimonies of the apostasy rampant within the Evangelical movement reveal why it is impossible to trust Evangelical scholarship today.

It is obvious that the Christian world has become permeated with confusion in regard to the Bible. Modernism has captured most mainline denominations. Roman Catholicism, never a friend of Scripture, today is largely denominated by modernistic approaches to the Bible. New Evangelicalism has captured much of the rest. The theories of inspiration held by theologians have continually shifted. This makes it difficult to treat in detail. *The bottom line is that all unsound theories of inspiration allow for errors in the Bible. Some allow for much error; some allow for a little error; but all allow for error. This identifies a false view of inspiration. If the Scriptures are not the perfect inspired Word of God throughout and in every detail, they are not what Jesus Christ and the Apostles claimed.*

For a more thorough study of the history of Modernism, Fundamentalism, and New Evangelicalism see the author's 377-page book *Evangelicals and Rome*, which is available from Way of Life Literature.

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